



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 25, 2013

MEDIA CONTACTS
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**Navajo Nation Council votes down legislation
allowing Navajo Technical College to be named a university**

Legislation sponsor plans to introduce new legislation addressing Council's concerns

WINDOW ROCK – The Navajo Nation Council voted down Legislation No. 0077-13 during the Spring Session on Apr. 16, at the request of legislation sponsor Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock).

Legislation No. 0077-13 was aiming to approve amendments to Title 2 and Title 15 of the Navajo Nation Code, as well as the articles of incorporation for Navajo Technical College, which would allow for the institution to change its name to Navajo Technical University.

The legislation was first considered by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee on Mar. 20, where HEHSC members voted 4-1 to table the legislation, and referred it on to the Law and Order Committee.

At the Mar. 20 meeting, HEHSC members expressed concerns over a proposed amendment in the articles of incorporation that would allow NTC to establish its own institutional review board.

The proposed IRB would have the responsibility of reviewing and approving all human and animal research conducted by NTC students, faculty, and individuals associated through institutionally sponsored projects.

Language in the original legislation also proposed for NTC's IRB to be exempt from the Navajo Nation Human Research Board.

On Apr. 1, LOC members amended NTC's articles of incorporation to allow its proposed IRB the authority to approve all social science and animal research conducted by students of NTC.

However, under the amended language, NTC would have to obtain approval from the Navajo Nation HRB for all other research, including medical and clinical research.

At the start of Council's discussion, Delegate Simpson acknowledged that the concerns surrounding the proposed IRB would need to be resolved, and thus recommended removing certain portions in the legislation including NTC's articles of incorporation.

The removal of the articles of incorporation would amend Legislation No. 0077-13, allowing HEHSC to serve as oversight of universities, and also allow NTC to change its name to Navajo Technical University, explained Delegate Simpson.

Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) asked for a cost-analysis detailing how the transition to a university might affect the Navajo Nation's budget.

“With uncertainties surrounding Navajo Generating Station, the BHP Mine, and federal sequestration, we should be asking how this will impact the Navajo Nation budget,” Delegate Curley said.

Delegate Simpson responded saying, “We cannot allow ourselves to be blocking stones. We want all of our schools to progress and succeed.”

NTC President Dr. Elmer Guy also urged Council to allow NTC to be renamed.

“It’s a part of building the Navajo Nation economy,” said Dr. Guy. “With your support, we can continue to build our nation, and this is the way to do it.”

After consultation with the legislation sponsor, Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) motioned for the proposed amendments recommended by Delegate Simpson.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said the proposed amendments defeat the purpose of the legislation, which is to address NTC’s articles of incorporation.

Delegate Tsosie also questioned the rationale for seeking a name change asking, “Why do we need to use the word ‘university’ when there are premiere universities that do not use the word ‘university’?”

Delegate Curley suggested that the two amendments be handled separately.

“We are giving HEHSC a new power [to oversee universities], and we are also ratifying an action [renaming NTC] by HEHSC on a matter that they don’t have power over,” Delegate Curley said.

Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) motioned to table the legislation and refer it back to HEHSC to allow HEHSC members to resolve the issues concerning the proposed amendments.

Supporting the tabling motion was Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin) who drew attention to a signed petition from NTC students in support of the legislation.

“The proposed amendments are not in line with the scope of the petition signed by NTC students,” Delegate Nez said.

Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) disagreed with the tabling motion saying the proposed amendments make it an enabling legislation.

“I support the university idea,” said Benally. “We should give our children the choice to get their education, give them that option.”

After an hour of discussion, legislation sponsor Delegate Simpson asked Council colleagues to withdraw the tabling motion, and to vote down the legislation to allow time to reintroduce new legislation that addresses the concerns.

“We owe it to our students, and our people to take time to work these issues out and do this the right way,” said Delegate Simpson.

Council members voted down Legislation No. 0077-13, with 5 supporting and 14 opposing the bill.

###